

Mallory Bateman, Utah

1) Brief biography.

My name is Mallory Bateman and I am the State Data Center coordinator and a Research Analyst at the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. I have worked in various types of research and public involvement and engagement capacities for the past 8 years. I earned a BA in Urban Planning from the University of Utah and an MSc in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics. I feel very lucky that my current role provides a wonderful opportunity to synthesize my academic and work backgrounds in a very unique way. I'm very interested in helping people in the community learn about the resources available to them, empowering them to utilize those resources to inform decisions, and producing materials to help them better understand these resources.

2) What goals or special perspective would you bring as a Steering Committee member?

I believe that I bring three useful perspectives, which build on my goal of helping people really grasp the importance and utility of the Census: being new to the position, being a lifelong fan of the Census, and my diversity of experience.

Becoming the SDC coordinator for our state has been a very exciting experience for me. I heard the title several years ago and was confused as to why the person in the role at the time did not have a more public-facing persona. Fortunately for me, my organization is filled with leadership who were closely involved with prior iterations of the SDC and want me to create a vibrant and engaged program in Utah. I think being part of the Steering Committee would provide me with much more insight about how other SDCs work. Additionally, I think my (current) outsider perspective could allow me to think about things in a different way than those who are more immersed in the network.

I remember learning as a child that the Census was every 10 years and basically starting a countdown clock until our form would come and I got to be the designated form filler. I also ran a Census for the town I had created in my basement when I was about 11. I did this so I could better plan services and locate the grocery store appropriately. I joke about how this is totally normal behavior for a kid and how I feel incredibly lucky to have the opportunity now before me. This job is the height of nerdy excitement for me, and I really want to run with it and make our state SDC grow. I want to fully jump into the position and get involved as much as possible, and the Steering Committee would allow me to do that.

Although I've only been in the full-time workforce for just shy of a decade, I've been fortunate to wear many hats. I have had the opportunity to work with Federal regulations through the NEPA process, which has helped me develop skills with reading and understanding language that is not always approachable. Through my work in public involvement and community engagement, I have tried to rephrase a lot of what I have learned in a much more public friendly way to help people gain a greater understanding of what they are looking at. My background in policy research has added a great motivation to really dig to find out how things evolved to get the end result seen publicly. I believe that these skills differentiate me from those who have more demographic or statistical backgrounds, and I feel like that diversity could bring some new ideas to the table.

3) What is your vision for the SDC network and our partnership with the Census Bureau?

I think the SDC network provides an incredibly useful conduit between the Census Bureau and the public, although people might not be aware it is a resource. I would want to support and encourage the existing outreach efforts through social media and the Clearinghouse, as well as trying to brainstorm ways that the network could broaden their engagement with a public audience. I know most of us are working with fairly restrictive budgets, so I think this allows for some creativity and innovation in how to approach increasing the outreach of the SDCs.

4) What can the SDC network do to add value for the data-using public?

I think the SDCs are a great asset for states, as they can provide an actual human connection to what can at times seem like a daunting process of navigating the Census Bureau. In my short time in my role, I have helped people within my own organization sift through the mountain of offerings from the Census Bureau to find what they need. The Census Bureau has so much to offer the public, but finding what you need can be quite a large hurdle. I love having the opportunity to 1) make people feel like someone is willing to help them find what they need and 2) helping them understand what is available and hopefully making them feel confident that they could find it on their own in the future.

Additionally, in Utah, we have a slightly different opportunity where the Data Centers are housed in a government entity. With the recent move of the SDC to the University of Utah, we have the opportunity to work in a slightly different environment and interact with our Governor's Office and other governmental partners in a different way. I've seen great value in my ability to focus attention on Census Bureau happenings, relay then to our Governor's Office, and keep things relevant. I think this interplay between the Census Bureau and the states is critical as we get closer to 2020.